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GSURC-Proposal

The Role of Structural Priming in Interaction-Driven Language Learning

Abstract- Structural priming refers to the tendency for people to produce a syntactic structure present in the recent discourse (Trofimovich & McDonough, 2013). Over the last decade, language acquisition research has shown the benefits of priming in second language learners' production of linguistically more advanced structures (McDonough & Trofimovich, 2009). However, how structural priming impacts the learning of grammar over time has not been widely investigated. Furthermore, the role of repeating the same primes and prompts has not been investigated. The purpose of the current study is thus to examine how structural priming affects the process of learning relative clauses by Korean English as a foreign language (EFL) learners during interactive priming tasks. A total of 60 students participated in pretest, two priming sessions, and two posttests over three weeks. They were randomly assigned to one of the following three conditions: no priming, prime repetition and no prime repetition. The no priming group did not participate in any priming tasks, whereas the two priming groups carried out two priming tasks over two days. The prime repetition group repeated the same prime and prompt on the second session, whereas the no prime repetition group was provided with different primes and prompts during the second session. Priming tasks were information-gap task, which asked students to provide information about reading materials. In order to examine how different priming conditions affect the learning of relative clauses, learners were asked to take pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest two weeks after the second priming session. They were oral picture description tests, which required learners to combine sentences to describe pictures. Oral production between the researcher and students during both priming and testing sessions was recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed for the suppliance and accuracy of relative clause reproductions. Results indicated that repeating primes and prompts facilitated Korean EFL learner's production of relative clauses; however, it did not promote the accuracy of relative clauses. The results are discussed in terms of the benefits of structural priming in promoting learning of grammar.